

# California Admission Day

## September 9<sup>th</sup>

By  
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For many years starting in 1951 we celebrated the anniversary of the day California was admitted as the 31<sup>st</sup> State to the United States of America. Around the state and even several parts around the country, folks would take the day celebrating the birth of our fabled statehood. Today if you ask anyone under the age of thirty, nearly all of them would have no clue of the significance of this date.

In 1845, the term Manifest Destiny, first coined in the July-August 1845 issue of *The Democratic Review*, swept across the nation where the idea was that the United States was destined to expand its borders across the entire North American continent, spreading democracy and capitalism at any cost. This was right on the heels of the vast territory expansion of the annexation of Texas as well to justify the Mexican American War, 1846-48.

In June of 1846, the nation was rocked with the news of the Bear Flag Revolt where the success of a small group of Americans were able to rebel against the Mexican government and proclaimed that California was now an independent republic. The California Republic held for 25 days until the United States Navy came to the aid of the rebellion and declared California was a part of the United States. The United States military easily was able to defeat the Californio Army pushing them into the depths of Baja winning nearly every battle and skirmishes throughout what was to become the state of California. In 1847, the Californios ceded Alta California with the Treaty of Cahuenga. The U.S. military continued to pursue through Baja and Mexico where in 1848, with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, The Mexican government ceded.

From 1848 to September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1850, California was defined not as an independent territory but as a part of a vast territory known as the Mexican Cession Unorganized territory spanning from the Pacific Ocean on the west, Texas on the east and another unorganized territory bordered in nowadays Oregon, Idaho, and Wyoming to the north. This territory was under martial and military appointed governors until the first California Constitution was approved in October 1849 held in Monterey. President Zachary Taylor pushed hard on the settlers in California and New Mexico to bypass becoming a territory and meet the qualification to allow application for statehood, fearing issues of disputed slavery in the new territories. The last military governor of California resigned on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1849, thus allowed for the first elected governor, Peter H. Burnett. Now California had a state constitution, a state government, and a state governor, only was not a state of the Union yet. In early 1850, petitions were made and pushed through Congress and eventually with the Compromise of 1850, recently appointed President Milliard Fillmore, who recently replaced President Taylor after he passed from a disease while in office, with pen to paper dated September 9, 1850, made California the 31<sup>st</sup> State.

News of California being a state did not reach California for over a month, where on March 18<sup>th</sup> a mail steamer docked in San Francisco flying many colorful flags and a banner announcing, "California Admitted." Off this steamer steps 19-year-old Mary Helen Crosby who hands Governor Burnett the actual official documents she carried and guarded on her voyage within her umbrella. Governor Burnett,

hastily rode from the port in a stagecoach to San Jose (California's new capital) screaming at the top of his voice, California is admitted into the Union!"

For the next several years it was every year a proclamation was made that as a State we recognize September 9th as a holiday and take in off in observation as the main streets throughout the state were to be filled with parades and celebrations commemorating the date. In 1889, the Seventeenth Governor, Robert Waterman requested the State Legislature to officially recognize September 9<sup>th</sup> as a formal legal holiday was everyone can plan on this day being off.

On this day of celebration state officials had the day off, banks were closed, and children were singing the state song "I Love You, California." This tradition lasted many years and was popular for parades, fireworks, and dances alike. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge even requested the Bear Flag fly over the White House as sign of remembrance and celebration. In 1937 the streets of Los Angeles had over 200,000 in attendance of a five-mile-long pageantry. In the early years of celebration though it only portrayed California's founders as white colonizers and not the immigrants who were here as long as them or the Indigenous People who were here far before any of them.

In January 1976, Senator Peter H. Behr, of the 4<sup>th</sup> District (Marin, Napa, and Solano Counties) proposes Senate Bill No. 1427 to amend Sections 5201, 13656, and 13656.2 of the Education Code, to remove Admission Day as a legal holiday for schools and classified employees. This bill passed and was eventually vetoed by Governor Jerry Brown where he stated as a State, we have celebrated this day for years with this tradition and it should continue.

In February 1984, Senator Alan Robbins, of the 22<sup>nd</sup> District (San Gabriel Valley) proposed that the Monday following September 9<sup>th</sup> is not a state holiday, instead asking the Governor to designate Monday, August 6, 1984, as a state holiday in lieu and would exempt school districts and community college districts. For state employees that Admission Day would instead have recognized on September 9<sup>th</sup> or the Monday if on a weekend, instead the Department of Personnel Administration would choose another appropriate day. This bill was adjusted and eventually approved and signed by Governor Deukmejian removing Admission Day as a State Holiday and created it as a Floating Holiday instead.

In 2017, when Jerry Brown was governor again, he tried to reinstate the holiday, but was unable to gain support in the Legislative Body, therefore on September 9<sup>th</sup> issued a Proclamation instead asking the State to remember the day.

Six years later, we are here again approaching the 173<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of California becoming the 31<sup>st</sup> State of the United States of America. We all should on this special day, take time to silently reflect on the history of how California became a state, all of its people, all of the 173 years of growth, all of the sacrifices, all the victories, all the losses and look upward and promise to continue to move us forward to a becoming a much stronger community of equality among all of us. We are Californians, and we are proud.